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HERDER.

ABOUT one hundred years ago, the Lutheran congregation of the little village of Mohrungen, in Prussia, was presided over by a clergyman of the name of Treschko; a most worthy man, and a most conscientious pastor. Indeed, like many of our American ministers, the good man combined a genuine love of humanity with a most enthusiastic admiration for Latin and Greek, intermingled here and there with a little Chaldean and Hebrew. It happened even frequently then, as now, that the reverend gentleman, full of the treasures of the classics, and the golden sayings of the Orientals, produced most learned sermons, of which his benighted parishioners—the small farmers and plodding loom-weavers of German villages—did not understand one single word. But their admiration of their pastor seemed to rise just in proportion as they did not comprehend the drift of his sermons, and even, on some occasions, when Mr. Treschko interlarded his classical effusions with a few practical parish hints, many of the congregation felt displeased, and expressed their surprise at Father Treschko's vagaries. As time rolled on, the worthy minister abandoned altogether the idea of intermeddling with the ethical department of parish affairs, and his sermons consequently presented a variety of classical erudition, which not only filled with ecstasy the minds of his dotting flock, but would really have conquered the Pagan prejudices of Plato or Aristotle themselves, could their mighty spirits have been summoned to attend the little church of Mohrungen; we have but little doubt that Father Treschko would have been successful in converting to lowly disciples of the meek Christ the brilliant champions of Greek philosophy.

Rev. Mr. Treschko was intensely happy, and, in all probability, nothing would have occurred to cloud his happiness if his eyes, dimmed by fifty years brooding over badly printed books, had not refused to render the customary services, sometimes compelling the good man to stop short in the midst of a sermon, his sight too weak to make out his rough and interlineated sermon drafts. In this emergency Mr. Treschko hit upon the idea of employing some person as amanuensis, to copy out fairly his sermons, and communicating this prospect to his intimate friend the schoolmaster of the village, the schoolmaster at once relieved the pastor's difficulty by offering him his own boy, a lad who could read and spell well, and who was early remarked for an exquisitely neat and beautiful handwriting; the offer was eagerly accepted by Mr. Treschko, and the boy himself seemed very much pleased with the opportunity. This boy was HERDER. Herder, therefore, became forthwith an inmate of Mr. Treschko's house, where he enjoyed the benefit of the Latin and Greek lessons which the juvenile Treschkos received from their father, the result of which was that theological aspirations were awakened in his mind at a very early period of life.

Herder was a lucky boy. He was only a short time

with the Rev. Mr. Treschko when a Russian physician, who happened to come to the little village, took a fancy to the youth, and he immediately obtained leave to take him to St. Petersburg. On arriving at Königsberg, however, the Russian spoke with so much enthusiasm of the attainments of his young *protégé*, that the German professors there thought it a duty to induce the youth to devote his genius to his own country. They, accordingly voted him, from some charitable fund, a stipend which would enable him to study at the Königsberg University, coupled with the condition that he should qualify himself for holy orders. This was acceded to by all parties, and Herder became an inmate of the Frederician college, where he attended not only the theological and classical lectures, but also those of Kant, who, at that time, was the professor of moral and metaphysical philosophy in the college.

While a student, Herder gave many private lessons, and, after attaining holy orders, he took some pupils to board, and also gave public lectures; nor did he omit to exercise his pen in periodic miscellany. His first poem was an ode to Cyrus, which celebrates, under antique names, the return from Siberia of certain illustrious exiles, who were related to one of his pupils. Through the influence of these connexions he obtained the situation of Lutheran minister at Riga, as well as that of rector over the high-school attached to the cathedral there. His eloquence, aided by a fine voice and figure, excited general admiration, and several publications, impressed with the seal of genius, worked in concert with these to attract the attention of the public. In 1768, in his twenty-fourth year, he accepted the office of companion to the young prince of Holstein-Eutin on his travels through Germany and France. At Strasburg he met Goethe, and with him founded a friendship which endured for life. In order to present the subject of our essay in various lights, we here quote from Mr. Lewes' "Life of Goethe" an extract, in which occurs a comparison between these mighty spirits:

"The acquaintance with Herder was of great importance. Herder was five years Goethe's senior, and had already created a name for himself. He came to Strasburg with an eye disease, which obliged him to remain there the whole winter, during the cure. Goethe, charmed with this new vigorous intellect, attended on him during the operation, and sat with him morning and evening during his convalescence, listening to the wisdom which fell from those lips, as a pupil listens to a much loved master. Great was the contrast between the two men; yet the difference did not separate them. Herder was decided, clear, pedagogic; knowing his own aims, and fond of communicating his ideas. Goethe was skeptical and inquiring. Herder, rude, sarcastic, and bitter; Goethe, amiable and infinitely tolerant. The bitterness which repelled so many friends from Herder, could not repel Goethe. * * * * * It is somewhat curious that although Herder took a great liking to his young friend, and was grateful for his kind attentions, he seems to have had no suspicions of his genius. The only fragment we have of that period, which gives us a hint of his opinion, is in a letter to his bride, dated February, 1772: 'Goethe is really a

good fellow, only somewhat light and sparrow-like, for which I incessantly reproach him. He was almost the only one who visited me during my illness in Strasburg whom I saw with pleasure; and I believe I influenced him in more ways than one to his advantage.' His own colossal conceit may have stood between Goethe and himself; or he may have been too conscious of his young friend's defects to think much of his genius. Herder loved only the abstract and ideal in men and things, and was for ever criticising and complaining of the individual, because it did not realize his ideal standard. What Gervinus says of Herder's relation to Lessing, namely, that he loved him when he considered him as a whole, but could never cease plaguing him about details, holds good also of his relation to Goethe through life. Goethe had little of that love of mankind in the abstract, which, to Herder, and so many others, seems the substitute for individual love; which animates philanthropists who are sincere in their philanthropy, even when they are bad husbands, bad fathers, bad brothers, and bad friends. * * * * * Herder's influence was manifold, but mainly in the direction of poetry. He taught him to look at the Bible as a magnificent illustration of the truth that poetry is the product of a national spirit, not the privilege of a cultivated few. From the poetry of the Hebrew people he led him to other illustrations of national song; and here Homer and Ossian were placed highest. * * * Besides Shakspeare, and Ossian he also learned, through Herder, to appreciate the 'Vicar of Wakefield.'"

Two years later, in 1770, Herder won the prize offered by the Academy of Berlin, for a dissertation on the Origin of Language, which he considers as an instinctive evolution of human organization. Soon after this he was appointed court-preacher to Count Schaumburg-Lippe, through whose influence he progressively became superintendent and consistorial counsellor at Bückeburg. During his residence there he published many prose works, which widely extended his literary reputation. In 1773 he again won the prize offered by the Academy of Berlin, for a dissertation on the "Causes of the Decline of Taste," and, in 1775, in his thirty-first year, he accepted an invitation to the court of the Duke of Weimar, who appointed him to the triple offices of general superintendent, consistorial counsellor, and chaplain at Weimar. In 1779 he won a third prize at Berlin, for a dissertation on the reciprocal influence of government and science. But he attended sedulously to his local duties. He drew up a new catechism; revised the public services of the church; enlarged the orchestra; extended and liberalized the seminaries of instruction; and obtained, in 1789, the further rank of vice-president of the Consistory.

Having translated into German, under the title *Terpsichore*, the Latin odes of the Bavarian poet Baldi, in 1791 the Elector of Bavaria transmitted to him letters of hereditary nobility for his patriotic exertions. Herder continued to reside at Weimar, in the constant enjoyment of the comforts of affluence and the society of genius. The intimate friend of Goethe and Wieland, honored by the whole ducal family, venerated by the people, he lived there happily until the 18th December, 1803, when, in his

fifty-ninth year, he died quietly, while he was occupied in composing a hymn to the Deity.

The smooth current of Herder's life presents few episodes out of which sentimental minds could weave a romance, or in which those who love to see genius struggling with adversity could find aught to gratify their melancholy craving. Herder possessed the commanding moral greatness of a singularly well-balanced mind. His physical nature was harmoniously developed; his countenance noble; his stature stately; his bearing dignified. In his intellectual nature sober reason ever battled with a glowing imagination to keep his soul under faithful allegiance to moral law, and he actually combines the appearance, through his life and his book, of a lofty Idealist, worshipping at the shrine of his favorite philosophy, and of an austere magistrate, keeping order and decorum in the midst of inward pressure of thought. We hear sometimes of men controlling the carnal passions, and achieving great victories. But here is an instance of a man who had to control his spiritual passions; who, to serve humanity, had to lower himself frequently to its child-like exigencies; who, not being able to do all the good which he wished to do, did just as much good as the state of civilization allowed him to do. His was a far-seeing genius; he saw clearly his own nature, clearly that of his fellow-beings, clearly that of society, clearly that of history, clearly that of humanity.

His views of humanity are beautifully expounded by Mr. Bancroft.

"To the question, what is humanity?" says Mr. Bancroft, in his essay on his writings, "Herder would have answered, the best part of human nature; the sum of good affections, generous dispositions, and noble principles of action by which man is capable of being moved and guided. This idea of humanity was one which possessed his affections and his reverence. It was the favorite subject of his thoughts, and he delighted to believe and to gather proofs, that men are becoming more and more humane. Others have loved to revile mankind, in the bitter spirit of satire, with the vindictive temper of misanthropy, to speak evil, not of the manners of their time only, but of human nature, and so to deny the best and most cheering part of the creed of philanthropy. Herder had no fondness for collecting examples of human folly or crimes. He felt that the world is full of beauty and excellence, and that man is the fairest and most exalted part of the visible creation, and, being, by the character of his mind, opposed to that cold and distrustful selfishness which will not confide in others, he loved to warm his heart with contemplating the examples of purity and disinterested virtue, of high-minded patriotism and ardent devotedness to the welfare of mankind. And he who is conversant with Herder's writings, will be disposed to think, that the world has been rich in such examples, and that men who have been gifted beyond measure by a bountiful and gracious Providence, have almost always associated the light of virtue with the brilliancy of genius."

Madame de Stael says of him:

"His mind, his genius, and his morality united have rendered

his life illustrious. His writings may be considered in three different points of view, those of history, literature, and theology. He was much occupied in the study of antiquity in general, and of the Oriental languages in particular. His book, entitled 'The Philosophy of History,' has more fascination in it than almost any other German production." . . .

The learned W. Taylor, of Norwich, says: "Herder may be characterized as the Plato of the Christian world." Thomas Carlyle expresses unbounded admiration of Herder, but does him hardly justice, in as much as he places him upon the same platform with Goethe. Herder, with his lofty spirituality of thought, deserves a far higher place in the regard of posterity than Goethe, with his idolatry, and egotism, and sensual philosophy.

With the exception of Herder's æsthetical essays, there is little in his writings that bears exclusively upon the Fine Arts. But how does it come to pass, that we give, in a paper like ours, such a prominent place to his character and influence? It is the *universality* of the man, which, in our opinion, constitutes his claim to the attention of all thoughtful minds. Schiller's moral enthusiasm, Lessing's conscientiousness, Jean Paul's goodness, Klopstock's sublimity, and Herder's universality, have infused into modern literature a spirit of humanity, and a noble, spiritual vitality, which never existed before. Here are men, who not only teach mankind by their writings, but by the example of their great, and pure, and virtuous lives. The allegiance in times past to teachers who taught beautiful, but did naughty things, has not proved successful. Let us be as charitable as we please to the eccentricities and infirmities of genius, but the Goethes and Byrons, however much we admire them, have no abiding hold upon our reverence. After all words have been exhausted to express our admiration for the wonderful manysidedness of the one, and the volcanic impetuosity of the other, we still feel that those very infirmities in their moral nature, which command our charity, vitiate the moral influences of their writings, however much they may in other respects be entitled to our most devout admiration. But not so the writers we have named; and if we were to single out one more than another, where catholicity of judgment was as comprehensive as the tenderness of his emotional nature was Christ-like, we would point to Herder. Historians and statesmen, and, generally, sober and grave minds, may consider Schiller too ideal; Lessing too scorching; Jean Paul too sentimental; but in Herder we find a glowing imagination, a critical mind, and a heart overflowing with humanity,—singularly chastened, softened, and almost repressed by a soaring spirit of Humboldt-like universality, and dignified by his exalted idea of his mission as a minister of Christ. He rarely spoke of the individuality and character of Christ, evidently agreeing with Shakspeare, that—

"To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume o'er the violet,

To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful, and ridiculous excess."

But the drift of his sermons was to Christianize History, Literature, the Fine Arts, to Christianize Humanity. What a noble theme for mental contemplation is a picture of the Weimar chapel, with the imposing form of Herder in the pulpit, and the noble and intellectual personages of the Weimar court occupying the royal pews, with the massive, Jupiter brow of Goethe towering in the Poets' Corner of the chapel, supported on one hand by the ideal Achilles face of Schiller, and on the other by the kindly St. John's look of Jean Paul, all listening occasionally to the eloquence of the man, who with a head, which was in itself an ambulating university, called upon poets and artists, and all other laborers, to become, if not official, at any rate, efficient missionaries of the lowly Nazarene!

But painters then, as now, idealized the past instead of idealizing the present; no artist was found to give to posterity a glimpse of this most hallowed chapel; nor were sermons published in those days in such remarkable abundance as they are in our days. With the exception of a few published ones, the literary influence of Herder's sermons did not transcend the limits of private correspondence; one or the other lady or gentleman, whose heart had been moved, and whose intellect had been excited by one or the other sermon, conveying the impression to some other friend. That was all. It is, however, fortunate enough, that at least a few such records of Herder's power in the pulpit have been preserved. For the rest, we find in his writings ample evidence of his strong faith and inexhaustible love. Both are incarnated in that same spirit of Herderian *universality*, to which we have already so emphatically alluded.

He recognized the individuality of man, or the individuality of nations; and as God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-trees yielding fruit after its kind," so Herder said, "Let Humanity bring forth good fruit, every nation yielding fruit after its kind." Every individual has a peculiar power for good; so has every nation. But in Herder's code of humanity there is divine order. Not a vestige of sentimental demagogism! Not a word to make silly Hans believe that he is as wise as accomplished Peter! Not a word to intoxicate infant Rome with the hallucination that she is superior to venerable Judah! Not a word to make the backwoodsman in the Canadian wilderness believe that he is wiser than the thoroughly cultivated gentleman of Edinburgh! In every one of his words we are reminded of the laws of the universe, the laws of order, the laws of a harmonious development of history and humanity. He does not put Yankees and Hebrews, Britons and Franks, Teutons and Celts, in the same Procrustean bed. . . . "There is diversity of gifts, a diversity

of nations"—this cry ever vibrates through his writings. Asia after its kind, Africa after its kind, and Europe after its kind, and America after its kind, and Russia after its kind. Natural enough, that a man, entertaining such comprehensive views should have the power of identifying himself with the spirit of every particular country that happens to become the subject of his observation, or the theme of his muse.

So we find in Herder's writings about the Orient an atmosphere which carries us back to the times of David, the inspired songster; and Solomon, the voluptuous man as well as philosophical ruler. We are dazzled with the splendor of thought, which ever spreads a luminous radiance over the Arabian Deserts, and occasionally we get excited as if old Tyre, with its commerce, and Alexandria, with its high-schools, had revived again, and we heard again the lusty voices of the Phœnician sailors, as exulting in their success, they return home from their trip to Venice; or, as if we read reports of the discussions of its theologians, hot from encounters with some of the sages of Athens. Asia is brought home to us, throbbing with life, and smoking with reality. We begin to realize the *intensity* of Asiatic feeling, which makes even the posthumous life of Asia still the spiritual Law-giver of mankind. As we follow the guidance of Herder's thought, we begin to realize the Asiatic influence. Soaring mountains and sun-scorched deserts, kingly levies, and stately horses, are brought before our thin, pale occidental minds; and we, who boast of our great activity of thought, are humiliated to find that the dreamers of Asia, inveigled into contemplative life, by the nature of the climate,—achieving more by one flash of thought, than we by whole generations full of brain-torturing learning. Nature around the Asiatic keeps his mind in communion with vast and soaring spheres,—yet he thinks rarely;—he dreams his life away; but, let something be done to evolve the necessity of thought in these indolent children of the Tigris or the Desert, and the thought rushes out, roaring from the brain, like the proud Himalaya lying out of the mountain-girded forest, or it trots about fiercely, impetuously, like some of those wondrously magnificently desert-bred Arabian horses. Such an earthquake of thought can come only once in a thousand years; but whenever it comes, it shakes the world; and the children of future generations are told wondrous tales of Moses and Mahomet, or some other Law-Thunderer of Asiatic origin. And in the same manner Herder takes you from one world to another world,—to the European lands, where he finds Greece, Italy, Germany, Britain, France,—all with peculiar missions to perform to work out their own good and the good of humanity—not according to the arbitrary plan of some imaginative leveller—but according to their own organic development, according to *their kind*. What a pity that Herder did not live to enlighten us about our own country! But, if we may be allowed to infer his opinion, from what we conceive to be his general philosophy, we would not hesitate to say, that he

never would have belonged to those who look with a sad, gloomy, desponding view forward to our future. He would, in the first place, have loved us for our power to dispauperize the world to some extent; to make, at least, by the extent of our industry and agriculture, more comfortable—certainly, materially more happy—millions of families, who, in Europe, would have remained hopeless paupers. In the extraordinary spirit of enterprise which characterizes young nations—young Russia as well as young America—he would have seen a civilizing influence; but he would have called in the experiences and achievements of all older countries; the Fine Arts, the culture, the refinement, the thought of the older worlds, to give to the new civilization a noble, moral basis; thus preventing the new worlds from wrecking upon the same rocks of practical Paganism upon which all previous efforts towards free societies have so wretchedly split.

But we do not intend to enlarge here upon speculations of such a character. We only wish we could give to our readers an idea of Herder's Universality of Thought, by quotation from his writings, for we could then better accomplish our object than by discursive comment.

His negro-idyls are written with the tear-dipt pen of Humanity; and these, as well as his Orient Poesy, and his Catholic legends abound with beauties, but we have no space left for extracts. His accomplished wife, Caroline Herder, one of the noblest women at the court of Weimar, and herself of rare literary genius, wrote the history of the life of her husband. The union of these remarkably gifted beings reminds us somewhat of Mr. and Mrs. Browning of our days, and refutes the fallacy, that men of high souls and great attainments cannot live happily except with ladies of inferior natures.

In conclusion, we again commend heartily to our friends the study of the writings of the great Herder. There is in the universality of his thoughts somewhat of the same music which endears Haydn's, Beethoven's, and Mozart's symphonies to the heart of Humanity. Although in words somewhat overshadowed with thought, yet fully intelligible to those whose ears are well tuned to higher music, Herder sings of *first principles* and their immortality, and if words, such as his, could find their way into the heart of our civilization, the nightmare of materialism, which bodes so ill to our Arts, and threatens to crush with its sad weight the higher aspirations of our national and individual life, might, with the aid of Providence, gradually give way, and proclaim to the farthest posterity, that hard labor may well go hand in hand with elegant refinement, and the shrewd and sturdy pursuits of business with the noble and enthusiastic devotion to Art,—the *Useful* hand in hand with the *Beautiful*!

To educate is not to communicate knowledge on certain definite subjects, but to train the heart to feel generously, and the mind to think justly,—not on this or that special subject, but on all the million subjects with which life will bring the grown man into contact.—*Oxford Essays*.